

Playground Pals



Developing Social Skills

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Session

This social skills group will run for eight sessions throughout the marking period. The group will run once a week for 30 minutes. Throughout these eight sessions, the participants will develop skills associated with appropriate social interactions. These skills will involve gaining attention appropriately, maintaining and recognizing appropriate voice volume in conversations, reading and interpreting facial expressions, developing social stories, role-playing those social stories and working together on a group project. This group will be comprised of 4-6 students therefore allowing the students to gain confidence and comfort through the working of a smaller group.

Participants

The target population for this group will consist of elementary students in grades one and two who have been referred to the school counselor by their teachers and are on the Autism Spectrum. This group may also be used for those students not on the Autism Spectrum yet have social difficulties.

Goals

The Goals will include:

- Attaining appropriate attention from others.
- Recognizing facial expressions and how to appropriately and successfully respond to them
- Feeling comfortable functioning with others and having successful interactions to work towards a common outcome.

Screening Process

Participants will be referred to the school counselor by their individual teachers. The school counselor will meet with each student individually to assess the potential of each student's participation in the group. The school counselor will monitor the level of anxiety for each student and determine whether group or individual counseling would be more appropriate. The school counselor will also monitor whether the student wants to make a change in his/her social awareness and whether they have potential to be a strong member of the group.

Confidentiality

Upon the approval of the participation in the group, the counselor will meet once again with the participant to discuss confidentiality, get a signed permission slip and explain the guidelines of the group; which were discussed previously. During this meeting the school counselor will explain the notion of keeping information shared in the group private unless the information is harmful to oneself, others or others may harm oneself. This will allow the student to feel comfortable with sharing any information that they may otherwise be shy to share. This meeting is also pertaining to the parents of the participant and allowing the parents to ask any questions that would include the involvement of their child in the group.

Resources

Corey Schneider, M., Corey, G. & Corey, C. (2010). *Groups process and practice*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Dewar, Gwen (2009). *Social Skills activities for children and teenagers: Ideas inspired by research*. www.parentingscience.com/socialskills-activities.html

Session 1 – Ice Breaker #1 “The Name Game”

Objective: Students will get to know everyone in the group and begin to gain attention from others appropriately. This will allow students to recognize that you must state a person's name in order to gain attention.

Materials:

- Plastic Ball

Procedure:

- The group sits in a circle facing one another.
- The counselor hands one child in the group the plastic ball.
- The child holding the ball must call out another child's name and then roll the ball to that child. The child must call out the name of the other child first before he can roll the ball.
- The child who receives the ball will call out another child's name and then roll him/her the ball. This will continue on until all of the children have had a turn.

Closure:

- The counselor will ask the group:

What it was like for you to say a person's name prior to just throwing the ball?

How many of you just throw the ball on the playground without calling out the person's name you are throwing it to?

Was it easier to get the person's attention by calling out their name or harder?

What made it easier/harder?

Session 2 – Question Me & Establishing Rules

Objective: Students will continue to develop the sense of trust in the group by asking each other questions as well as establishing the expectations they have in the group. Students will also assist the counselor in establishing rules for the group.

Materials:

-Question Cards

-Bean Bags

Procedure:

- The counselor will discuss the previous session and talk about using the correct names for everyone in the group to gain attention.
- The counselor will stick Question Cards on the floor in 3 x 2 rectangle.
- Students will line up behind one another and one by one take turns to throw a bean bag at the Question Cards on the floor.
- After a student's bean bag lands on one of the Question Cards; the student will pick it up and (with the help of the counselor) ask the member behind them in the line the question.
- The other member will answer the question on the card and it will be their turn to throw the bean bag.
- This process will continue until all members have had a chance to throw the bean bag and answer a question.

These Question Cards will include items such as the participant's goals for the group as well as what their expectations and fears are being involved in the group.

- The counselor will then write the answers of the questions on each card pertaining to that person who answered that specific question. This will be to reflect back at the end of the group.
- The counselor will then go over some ground rules for the group involving confidentiality and respect towards one another. The counselor will ask for input from the group in terms of rules and write the rules on a poster board only to be displayed during the group time.

Closure:

- The counselor will ask the group to summarize what it was like to answer those questions today and how it made them feel to be so open in front of other people.
- The counselor will also ask the group if there were any concerns about the rules that were made.

What is it like for you to be in this group?	What do you want to learn from this group?
Do you think this group will be helpful?	What is it like for you to be in this group?
What do you want to learn from this group?	Do you think this group will be helpful?

Session 3 - When I Yell . . .

Objective: Allow students to recognize appropriate voice levels and help them to gain control of comfortable volumes when in an intimate conversation.

Materials:

- Volume Cards

Procedure:

- The Counselor discusses the rules again and talks about implementing those rules throughout their time in group.
- The Counselor discusses different levels of sound. The counselor explains what a whisper is and what a yell or loud volume is.
- Counselor makes up volume cards that have conversation starters on the cards as well as a level of volume.
- The counselor hands out a card to each participant telling them not to show the other participants what is on their card.
- The counselor will then call on a participant to share what is on their card in the volume that is mentioned. The participant will turn to another member and verbally exclaim the greeting on the card with the volume specified.
- Each participant will go around verbally expressing what is on their card to the other members.

Closure:

- The counselor will ask group to talk about their reactions to when a person yelled their greeting, whispered their greeting, or spoke in an environmentally appropriate volume.
- The counselor will ask each group member to think about their reactions to these differences in volume and write down their reactions and what their bodies/faces were doing when they had these reactions. The group will look at these written reactions for next session.

<p>“Hello, How are you?”</p> <p>-Talk Loudly-</p>	<p>“My Name is _____. What is yours?”</p> <p>-Whisper-</p>
<p>“Good Morning.”</p> <p>-Inside Voice-</p>	<p>“Hello, My name is _____.”</p> <p>-Talk Loudly-</p>
<p>“Good Afternoon.”</p> <p>-Whisper-</p>	<p>“Goodnight.”</p> <p>-Inside Voice-</p>

Session 4 – Emotions Memory Game

Objective: Students will be able to recognize different emotions through facial expressions. They will also be able to identify these expressions/emotions and how to react to them with their voice level and tone.

Materials:

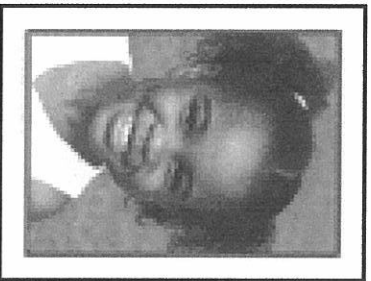
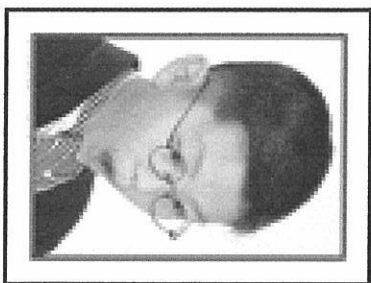
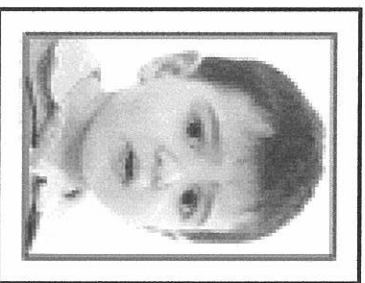
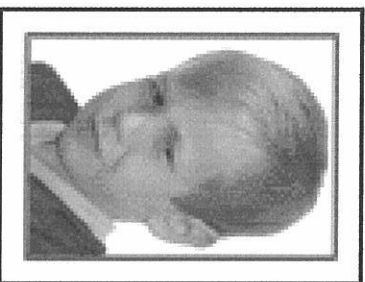
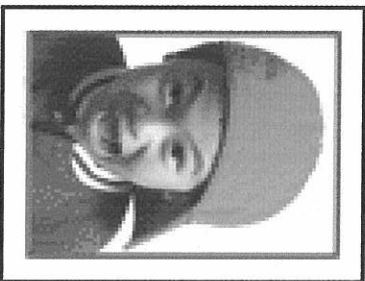
- Duplicates of facial expression cards for Memory Game.

Procedure:

- Counselor talks with participants about their written reactions that they brought from last session.
- Counselor shuffles the deck and lays all of the cards upside-down.
- The participants are going to be playing the game Memory with facial expressions. Each participant turns over two cards to make a match of the same facial expression. Once a participant receives a match, the group talks about the facial expression and what emotion that person is feeling.

Closure:

- The counselor will talk individually about each emotion that is expressed in the facial expression Memory game. The counselor will follow through with questions regarding emotions:
 - When have you felt this emotion?
 - How did your body feel?
 - What were you thinking/doing when you felt this emotion?
 - What is different about their face when they are happy?
- Talk about how to read different emotions on faces. Ex: When you are happy, you smile, your cheeks go up and your eyes are wide.
- Follow through with questions such as; When you are sad how to you want to be talked to? What would it be like if someone would yell at you when you are mad? How would you react?



Session 5 – Understanding Your Story

Objective: Discuss Social Stories and how they pertain to developing social skills. Show the participants a social story on how to ask someone to play. Allow the participants to see the appropriate social interactions through a short story.

Materials:

- Example Social Story
- Paper
- Crayons/Pencils/Markers

Procedure:

- Recap the previous session by talking about how to react to social cues from other individuals.
- Read the social story, “Asking Someone to Play”.
- Discuss how the characters in the story asked someone to play and the reactions associated with it.
- Have each student develop their own social story:
 - Ask each student what they would like to work on.
 - Give examples of social stories and ideas.

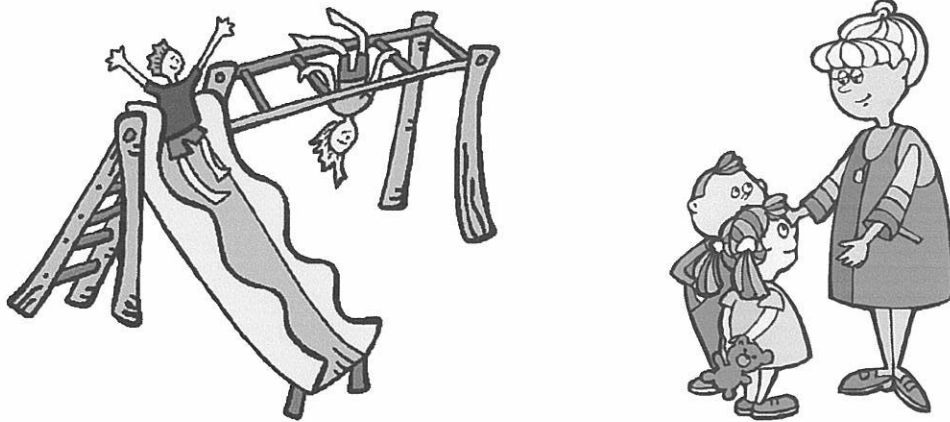
Closure:

- Have the students continue their social stories at home for the next session if they did not have time to finish them. Extend the offer for the participants to come in for extra help if they are stuck.

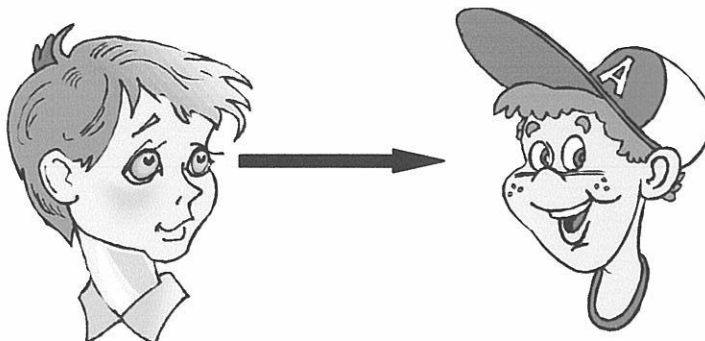
Asking Someone to Play



My name is _____ and I love playing with other kids.



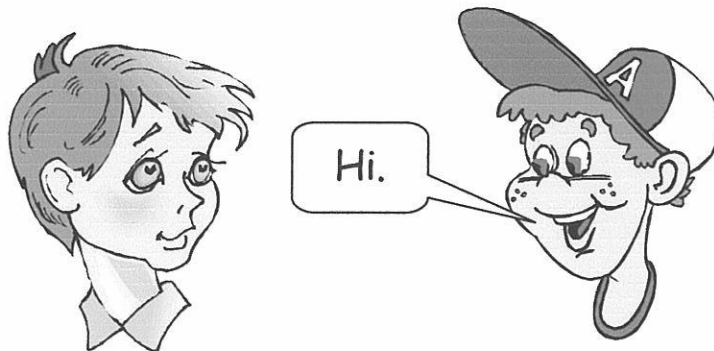
At recess and in my class there are lots of kids I can play with.



When I want to play with someone I need to do these things: First I look at the person's face.



Next I say their name to get their attention.



I wait until that person looks back at me.



Then I say, "Can I play with you?" or "Will you play with me?"



If the person says "yes", then I get to play with the person.



If the person says "no," it's OK. I can find another person to ask.



It makes me feel happy that I know how to ask someone to play with me.

Session 6 – Show Me You're Stuff

Objective: Allow the students to interact and practice their social stories prior to going out and trying their new skills in the school or outside environment. This will build confidence in their ability.

Materials:

- Student developed Social Stories

Procedure:

- Have students discuss their social stories and any concerns they have regarding them.
- Ask for students to pair up with another member of the group or the counselor (based on roles of role-playing)
- Have students role play their social stories so they feel comfortable with going out and having social interactions with others than in the group.
- Have other members observe the role-playing and add in commentary to assist student.

Closure:

- Discuss the positive aspects of the role playing and the accomplishment in sharing their social stories with the rest of the group.

Session 7 – Green Thumb

Objective: Allow students to work independently and dependently with one another in developing a small garden. Increase their social skills and allow students to use these skills in making the garden a success.

Materials:

- Gardening Pots
- Gardening Tools
- Soil
- Flower seeds
- Water
- Watering Can

Procedure:

- Talk with students about their successes with the social stories and how to incorporate them into group projects.
- Have students assign their own roles to seed, water, and maintain a garden. This will allow students to interact socially by working towards the same goal. The students will be able to see a firsthand example of what good social skills and communication can grow.

Closure:

- Have students develop a schedule of when to water the garden and check on the plants with the counselor's assistance.

Session 8 – Where You are Going Now

Objective: This session is to conclude our group work. This session will examine the participants' feelings with working together on a project and what expectations and goals they have accomplished.

Materials:

- Journal
- Pen/Pencil

Procedure:

- Talk about the Garden and how they interacted with each other to make the garden grow.
- Talk about the expectations and goals of the group and where each participant has succeeded throughout the group work.
- Present each participant with a Journal and a pen/pencil.
- Explain to the participant that the journal is for them to write in whenever they do something well. This would be helpful in any social situations that they felt they handled successfully.

Closure:

- Have the group talk about where they are willing to go with their social skills and what they plan on continuing to work on.